"centrality, solidarity, reconciliation...provoked much discussion and deepened some insights into the scope of the Eucharist" **(St. Andrew UMC, Memphis, TN)**.

2. Changes in the local church (already made or expected)

a. Worship

The study of BEM has already resulted in changes in local churches: one church **(Hope UMC, Faribault, MN)** has changed to a new order of worship (1972 Alternate Text). And another has called for the sensitive use of historic and trial liturgies **(Chehalis UMC, Chehalis WA)**; and still another church has gone to the practice of using one loaf **(St. Paul UMC, Trenton, NJ)**.

While one church hopes that BEM will "pave the way to the restoration of the Eucharist as the normative service worship" **(Red Hill UMC, Parkersburg, WV)**, others either disagree or are unsure of the "normative" nature or Eucharist for all worship.

A district consultation reported tensions, ascribing those tensions to our history: "We discussed the norm of weekly observance and its popularity and/or unpopularity. We felt the tensions between the 'free church' and Anglican roots from whence we come" **(Long Beach District, CA)**.

The same church that looked forward to the recovery of the normative role of the Eucharist also reflected:

> Though we have become more sacramental in recent years, the move to weekly celebration of the Eucharist would be a big move indeed (our present practice is monthly celebration, with additional celebrations on Easter and Christmas **(Red Hill UMC, Parkersburg, WV)**.

And another church in the same state was more frank:

> The idea of celebrating the eucharist at every worship service was not received with any enthusiasm. Those present at the discussion thought it would lose its impact if repeated that frequently. Also we would have to revise our Sunday service if we in a large church, had the Eucharist every Sunday **(Lewisburg, UMC, Lewisburg, WV)**.

One church noted that "Questions were raised regarding the church's more frequent participation of communion in light of evidence that indicates a pre-disposition for members of the congregation to be absent from celebrations of the supper" **(First UMC, Kane, PA)**. What all this points to, probably, is the connection between worship and the need for exposure, sensitization, and education.

Besides the logistical prblems and "cultural upset" that will attend a transition from infrequent to frequent communion, some churches are concerned about how "normative" the Eucharist is for Christian worship.

One church, which approached its study positively and articulated its findings fully and clearly, struggled with the BEM statement of the Eucharist's centrality (Section 12, I):

> Is central "first among others" or must Eucharist be included in every Sunday service? Because of the bountiful gifts of the Holy Spirit, there is no one way to worship God. As one participant stated, "I agree to the centrality of the Eucharist, but I don't want it to become an idol or too exclusively the way". We have similar problems with the statement in Eucharist 14 (II) (8) that "the memorial of Christ in the Eucharist is the basis and source of all Christian prayer". We simply doubt from all the examples of prayer in scripture that this is true" **(University Park UMC, Dallas, TX).**

Still, this church did conclude that while it would be difficult, the move to more frequent communion should be made. Ways were considered to expose parishioners to increased occasions for Eucharist, both in regular Sunday worship and at special worship celebrations such as weddings.

(e) Frequency and availability of the Eucharist. There was no groundswell of opinion for Eucharist more frequently than the first Sunday of the month. Interest at most was expressed in the longstanding practice of a larger, neighboring UM congregation which offers a separate Eucharist in its chapel at 9:00 a.m. each Sunday in addition to Eucharist at principal services in the main Sanctuary on the first Sunday. Some felt that further education of the congregation and revision of the liturgy should precede increasing frequency of the Eucharist. While they felt that the Eucharist should be more available to those who want it, others questioned whether the Eucharist should be offered so frequently "that it becomes slick and unthinking, unprayerful rote." Despite all objections, the issue remains of somehow breaking the ancient Reformation pattern of Eucharist only on the first Sunday of the month. Some effort should be made in that direction, whether it be a special chapel service one or more Sundays each month or converting one of the principal services in the sanctuary to a Eucharist on an additional Sunday,

perhaps according to the Alternate Text. Greater participation should be encouraged in our Prayer Group which meets for the Eucharist every Monday morning.

(g) Other occasions for the Eucharist. A diversity of opportunities for the Eucharist exist in Baptism, wedding, funeral and retreat services. Members should be made aware of the options by the clergy. While they cannot get too far ahead of the congregation, the clergy must take a more active role in promoting the Eucharist. Choice of the Eucharist for Baptism, weddings, and funerals by individuals offers an example to the entire congregation of the relevance of the Eucharist **(University Park UMC, Dallas, TX)**.

As we have seen, there is fear that the Eucharist might lose its meaning or impact if practiced too frequently, especially if it becomes "mechanical or habitual". Some were willing to risk losing the "specialness quality" because of the joy, sharing, and sense of Christ's presence they expect to receive. It was in this spirit that the two-church study group in Scituate and Coventry, Rhode Island, wrote: "Eucharist should take place frequently; that is, every Sunday (E30-E31). Six members support this recommendation; some thought it should be available daily". But finally, BEM study has already produced change in some cases, and churches must begin with "where they are". As one clergywoman wrote proudly,

> During the Sunday on Communion, we polled the congregation and found 80% wanted Communion more than three times per year (past practice here). The senior pastor is now committed to monthly communion. We have taken some steps toward the Church Ecumenical! **(First UMC, Delmar, NY)**.

b. Education

Several churches spoke of the need to teach about the Sacraments in church school and confimation classes and to alert others to see meaning in the diversity of eucharistic practices across the Church. Education is the key to understanding the "sacrament" as more than "symbol" **(St Paul UMC, Dayton, OH)**. Education is key to being able to change liturgical styles in the local church without being threatening. The importance of education for helping local churches see the value in more frequent celebrations of Eucharist has already been noted. Some churches posited the importance of education, including preaching, over against possible "overemphases" on such as "sacrifice" and "sacramentality". Other congregations pointed to the fact that Eucharist is both preaching and sacramental act, or the balance between word and table in BEM.

At least one church saw "preparation" as significant for proper appreciation of the Eucharist. This church (**First UMC, Kane, PA**) felt that serious preparation would require changes in both worship and education, specifically:

1) The development of a preparatory service to be used as a corporate preparation for the celebration of the supper
[and]
2) Development of a preparation guide for the use of the congregation prior to the celebration of the supper (This would apply also to devotional life and spiritual growth).

(c) Mission and Service

A few churches responded by saying that their study had resulted already in "outreach" on a regular basis to take the Eucharist to shut-ins. One church hoped that the study would open the door to dialogue. Several churches saw a connection between Eucharist and "ethical demand for reconciliation and wholeness" or an "impact on injustice, racism, separation, etc.".

(d) Devotional life and spiritual growth

Several churches wrote of a connection between Eucharist and personal devotions (such as preparation) and "table-meditation". One of the respondents hinted that children or ill-prepared persons, especially children, at the Lord's table tend to be distractive to others involved in "table-meditation". For some the altar is a "special place" and they wanted to continue "hallowing it as such" (**Bracken UMC, San Antonio**). One church spoke eloquently iof the need for more "wonder, awe, and mystery in our spirituality". Another saw the Eucharist as a way to deepen the church's spirituality: "The commion things of life can be used as symbols of the spiritual. The world about us can be the instrument by which God comes to us" (**Hennepin UMC**).

(e) Theological Perspectives

Hoped for changes in heightened awarenesses in the church represent a return in many ways to the statement on how BEM contains the faith of the church through the ages. Some of the themes expressed were: 1) Eucharist as sign of forgiveness and symbol of Christ's life and sacrifice (**Wesley UMC,Phillipsburg, New Jersey**); 2) Eucharist as the presence of Christ with us today; 3) Eucharist as our gift to God as well as God's gift to us; and 4) the concept of "symbol" and "remembrance". The Eucharist as meal of the kingdom was also helpful in some settings.

D. Question 4: Suggestions for Faith and Order

"Keep pushing" for more eucharistic fellowship and for a more open communion emerged as suggestions, as well as the advice that Eucharist be emphasized more and be celebrated more often in ecumenical gatherings (**Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ**). One church asked that there be made available specific models for shared eucharist. The problem is not that there are no resources. The problem is how to let congregations know about them so that the excitment can grow. One congregation asked for more clarity regarding theological definitions and terms in order to help with the understanding of the meaning and significance of Eucharist in the life of the Church (**First UMC, Kane, PA**). Another suggested that some articulation of the link between baptism and eucharist as "sacraments of unity" would be helpful Several churches stressed the need to move away from an individualistic or privatistic understanding of communion [and] instead see Eucharist more as an act of the community (**Centenary UMC, Mankato, MN; Chehalis UMC, WA; Hennepin UMC, IL; Whiting UMC, IN**).

V. MINISTRY

A. Question 1. The extent to which your church can recognize in this text the faith of the Chruch through the ages.

1. Ways that churches recognized the Church's faith in BEM

The churches affirmed that they recognized the faith of the Chruch through the ages in the opening section of BEM where trinitarian language is used to describe the nature and mission of the church (God's call to the whole of humanity, Christ's victory over powers of evil and death, the liberating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit (I. 1-3). There was general and deeply felt affirmation of the bifocal emphasis in BEM on the calling of the whole people of God and the special tasks of ordained or "set apart" ministry. There was recognition that "God has always called some to special ministries". But there was insistence on the priesthood of all believers and on the importance of being priests to one another in the Body of Christ (**Hennepin UMC**).

Some respondents were uncomfortable with what they perceived as lack of balance between the ministry of the ordained and the laity in BEM, or an overshadowing of lay ministry by the amount of attention paid to ordained ministries. One church wrote

> We were uncomfortable about the minimal emphasis on ministry of the laity. We saw Disciples, etc. taking greater interest and responsibility than most UM's (**Emmanuel UMC, Pole, IN**).

Another church put it this way:

> The only major weakness we found in the section on Ministry was that after the first six paragraphs in which the ministry of the whole people of God was affirmed, the rest of the study focused exclusively on ordained minstry. A fuller discussion and description of lay ministry and how it complements and relates to the ordained ministry might be indicated (**Windover Hills UMC, Pittsburgh, PA**).

Still another reporter said

> The laypeople noted that as many pages were spent on ministry as on the two sacraments together. They felt that this balance did not speak for their interest but pointed to the influence of clergy in the preparation of this document. "There is too much repetition in this section. It could be condensed for the ordinary person to understand better". The initial paragraphs on the calling of the whole people of God were clear and affirmed. The most popular paragraph was thirteen, "the chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assmeble and build up the body of Christ" (**Grace UMC, Dallas, TX**).

Another group felt deeply that this issue related to the struggle to involve lay persons creatively in the life of their local church:

> The most significant part of this section is the responsibility of the whole people of God for the life of the Church. This has been a particular struggle within our congregation and we need to address it rather directly. We especially sensed the need for the recognition of individual gifts, the need to draw these gifts out, and the need for them to be shared with the community (**Centenary UMC, Mankato, MN**).

Ministry of the whole church was also on the mind of the church in Texas (**Bracken, UMC, San Antonio**) which said it "greatly appreciated" this focus, but went on to note

> "Phrases in para. 11 about ordained ministry (e.g. heralds, ambassadors of Christ, leaders, teachers) could apply as well to lay ministry; the group suggest clarification here.".

The churches generally wished to assert, as one church did, "We are all in ministry; ministry is a way of life as we live our faith" (**First UMC, Burlington, VT**).

Several churches either enthusiastically affirmed the three-fold ordering of ministry as a reflection of current UM (defacto) practice, as recovery of earlier tradition, or as a timely ecumenical vehicle, and some saw this ordering in relation to the calling of the whole people of God (e.g. St. Paul UMC, Trenton, NJ). The three-fold ordering of ministry was seen by some positively as an option that could help the church move toward greater unity, even though there was little conviction over the necessity of that particular form:

a. All but one member of the group agreed with the statement in M-19 that, "The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the church". That is, the New Testament does not call for a particular church structure.

b. Most members of the group hold that the New Testament prescribes functions not struct[ures]. Hence, structure is not part of faith, fulfilling the function is. Hence, the various points on ministerial structures in BEM are neither inside or outside of the faith of the church through the ages (**Shepherd of the Valley UMC, Scituate, RI; Washington UMC, Coventry, Rhode Island**).

2. Ways the statement might better express the Church's faith

Other churches raised questions, expressed reservations or resisted uniformity as historically unhelpful. One church complained strongly that

> The statement exhibits a predisposition by the writers of this section on one Biblical pattern for ministry and does not allow for the investigation and discussion of alternative patterns. In paragraph 19 the observation is made that there are a variety of forms but the document chooses only to talk about a tri-fold understanding of the Church's ordained ministry. The study group felt that the paper used a lot of words to say very litte. That too much of what we understand to be ministry is emphasized in the ordained, and to that there is too little emphasis upon all the gifts of ministry that are found present in every church. It is our consensus that too much is left out in a predetermined conclusion of what ministry, in particular ordained ministry, must look like (**First UMC, Kane, PA**).

This group concluded "The church needs to be guided by the New Testament principle of no uniformity, but unity in ministry".

Another church reflected on the three-fold ordering of ministry in terms of changes that would result in our current understanding of bishop and deacon.

> The paper identified several issues surrounding ministry in general and ordained ministry in particular. One was the issue of ordination itself. Additionally, there were the issues of consistent terminology for ordained ministry, mutual recognition across denominational lines the three-fold pattern of ordained ministry, and the ordination of both women and men. Our group was able to affirm each of these issues as they relate to (ordained) ministry. An issue for the United Methodist Chruch is whether we are prepared to move toward an actual three-fold pattern of ministry. We have bishops on a permanent basis (though not a separate order) and presbyters (elders), but the third tier (deacons) are not a permanent order within our tradition. We also raised the question of what the advantages would be of moving toward an actual three-fold pattern of ministry. For instance, would there be an advantage to ordaining deaconal ministers to ministries of "service, justice and love", or does the current sturcture within the United Methodist Chruch adequately fulfill the three-fold pattern of ministry? **(Windover Hills UMC, Pittsburgh, PA).**

More will need to be said about the three-fold ordering of ministry and changes in the UM episcopacy and diaconate under the section below on "consequences...effects on the denomination's thought and practice."

One very important point raised strongly in the responses over and over is the issue of the way BEM deals with the ordination of women. Our local church respondents felt that BEM is inadequate.

> We saw the issue of women clergy as logical outgrowth of para. 22. If Spirit can work, then certainly women's place is affirmed by experience. Tradition is falsely given too much weight over against the experience of some churches **(Emmanuel UMC, Polo, IL).**

There was considerable unhappiness among a nubmer of members concerning the failure of BEM to endorse the ordiantion of women.

> There was consternation, concern, and division of opinion in the group over the issue of ordination of women. BEM described how some denominations ordain women while some do not.

BEM did not take a stand on whether women should be ordained. BEM's only recommendation was found in M-54, and said that the ordination of women should not be regarded as a substantive hindrance to mutual recognition of ministry. Seven members, including a Roman Catholic approved this recommendation, while three members opposed it. One Roman Catholic stated that this issue was a very substantive one, whether or not people denied it. The two UMC clergywomen in the group were not happy about recognizing ordained members in denominations which did not recognize their ordinations. BEM's failure to endorse the ordination of women was a major drawback or weakness in the document, according to most members of the group **(Shephard of the Valley UMC, Scituate, RI; Washington UMC, Coventry, RI)**.

It is clear that the issue of the role of women in the church is not peripheral but central. Laity in local churches want ecclesial engineers to understand that the ordination of women is non-negotiable.

It is also clear from the responses that United Methodists value the "set apart" minstry but take great care to guarantee and enhance the ministry of the whole people of God.

While all are "called" into ministry, one congregation felt that some dimension about the "call" needs to be reinstated in those who are in the ordained ministry, when it urged a "much longer, more exciting description of the place of call in the conditions for ordination" **(Grace, UMC, Dallas, TX)**.

B. Question 2: The consquences your church can draw from this text

1. The effect on the denomination's thought and practice

One congregation, responding to the question about the impact of taking the BEM text on ministry seriously, said that it "would call our whole understanding of ordained ministry into question" **(First UMC, Kane, PA)**: a strong doctrine of the priesthood of all believers raised the basic question, "Why ordain at all?" At the very least, another pointed, it would change the way some Annual conferences now deal with ordained persons who come from other communions and who are made to feel "unordained" (a mixing of the roles of ordination and conference membership?) One church said that serious consideration of BEM would produce "new insights into apostolic succession" **(St. Andrew's UMC, Memphis, TN)**, another called for better education in the local church on the meaning of ministry **(First UMC, Jacksonville, TX)**, and several pointed to changes necessary in the way we presently order ministry in the UMC. For example there was general agreement that the UMC

needs to re-define deacons and the diaconate. While there seemed to be consensus that the diaconate should not be a "stepping-stone" to the presbyterate, the feeling that this re-defined diaconate should be an ordained ministry was not unanimous. (37).

One church went on record as being opposed to the ordination of Deacons.

> The three-ordered ministry was generally acknowledged by the group, but there was strong sentiment from several that Deacons not be ordained (for this would confuse persons in the significance of ordination of presbyters/elders/priests, and "ordination" means (to most of the group the setting apart of a person as presbyter/elder/priest. There is appreciation for the office of Deacon as intrinistic to ministry, and not as a step to presbyters/elders/priest orders (unlike current UMC practice) **(Bracken UMC, San Antonio, TX)**.

Many churches urged the renewal of the diaconate and welcomed the ordained, permanent diaconate in the UMC.

> The UM Church needs to develop a diaconal ministry -- we liked how the document represented the ministry of deacons and can see that being very helpful in our churches **(Hope UMC, Faribault, MN)**.
>
> ...if taken seriously, UMC would ordain as deacons and demand liturgical expression of the various forms deaconal ministry takes in UMC: home missionaries, deaconnes (sic), diaconal ministers, deacons **(Whiting UMC, IN)**.
>
> We believe Deacons in the Methodist Church should not be seen as a movement toward Elders Orders but should be more in line with the early churches diaconal witness **(Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ)**.

The same kind of ambivalence, but general acceptance, emerged about the ordination of bishops. The church that was so strongly opposed to ordination of deacons also urged the continuation of the consecration rather than the "ordination" of bishops **(Bracken UMC, San Antonio, TX)**.

Other groups were very clear that they felt differently, partly due to the present "de-facto" third-order nature of UM episcopacy:

> We felt that the document might encourage the clarification and reform of the Episcopacy in our denomination **(Long Beach District Consultation, Pacific-Southwest Conference)**.
>
> It would require recognition that bishops are a third order and it really is time for us to acknowledge that. In practice, that is how we function already **(St. Paul UMC, Trenton, NJ)**.

However, they came at it, the churches felt that BEM could have far reaching consequences for the denominations thought and practice. One questioned whether it could result in a loss of the diversity so important in our heritage and tradition and lead to a kind of "sameness" or flatness that could be devastating **(Chehalis UMC, WA)** Another saw exciting possibilities ahead for the denomination: "There would be a reformation within the life of the church" **(Windover Hills UMC, Pittsburgh, PA)**. One church concluded by reflecting on how that local church would react to changes in the denomination's thought and practice in the area of ministry on this hopeful note:

> The original reaction to change in ordained ministry would be strong. But we feel church would adjust and maintain ministry in its new church **(Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ)**.

2. Relations with churches in the community

Relations with other churches in the community would be affected, first of all, by the new level of understanding and acceptance that would result from a study of BEM. On the one hand this has to do with relations between the ordained and lay ministries in every communion: "Awareness of and deeper understanding of the common ground we share both with the ranks of the ordained and the whole Body of Christ" **(Windover Hills UMC, Pittsburgh, PA)**. On the other hand, it has to do with relations between the church and the theological traditions. Various churches expressed this new awareness as : recognition of common orders and heritage, and awareness as: recognition of common orders and heritage, and understanding of "other forms of governance and ministry" **(O'Fallon/Williams Memorial, MO)**, appreciation of diversity, [we] learned "not to assume agreement on issues of church practice" **(Epworth UMC, Berkeley, CA)**, better understanding (after the study) of the Catholic tradition **(Red Hill UMC, Parkersburg, WV)**, and the potential for an easier mutual acceptance of ministries **(First UMC, Dover, NJ)**. There was an occasional warning about the dangers of uniformity **(First UMC, Kane, PA)**, but on the whole the churches saw the Ministry section on BEM leading to further genuine unity. One church even hoped that its study would one day "allow us to lead worship or celebrate the Eucharist in every church" **(Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ)**.

C. Question 3: Guidance

1. Ways the statement on ministry has been challenging or provocative.

As in the statement on Eucharist, the responses of the churches to this question represent a return to many of the same themes lifted up in the section on recognition of the church's faith. Several churches again emphasized the need for a better understanding, informed by BEM, on the ministry of the laity. One church articulated beautifully what future might lie beyond the BEM challenge:

> Like the Discipline, the Statement on Ministry in its primary emphasis on the ministry of all Christians. Challenges clergy and laity to move beyond their understandins of roles to development of true collegiality in ministry (**Whiting UMC, IN**).

Another area where several churches found BEM helpful was in the definition or "meaning" or ordination. The church claimed that the group that studied BEM came to an understanding of "what was involved in ordination" (**First UMC, Pittsburgh, PA**). Discussion in another church brought out that ordination is a non-repeatable act (**St. Andrews, UMC, Memphis, TN**). Still, it was felt that there was a challenge before the church to engage in more theological reflection on the meaning of ordination (**First UMC, Stamford, CT**) and the same time to move from the theological to the "practical" (e.g. in studying the relationship between ministry and "organization", (**First UMC, Kane PA**).

2. Changes in the local church (already made or expected)

a. Worship

The churches were in general agreement that renewed emphasis on the ministry of the laity should result in the presence of more lay leadership in the worship on the congregation. For one church this meant more participation by all members in the sacramental life of the church.

In particular, this would mean for that congregation

> We hopefully would see the administration of communion as being shared with the lay people of the church
> (**Wesley UMC, Phillipsburg, NJ**).

b. Education

The place to start changing attitudes about ministry and especially to cultivate laity for ministry is in the educational life of the church. Several churches saw

possibilities for education about our (and others') traditions regarding the practice of ministry. One church hoped to educate through exposure to numerous images of orders that are also biblically consistent" (**First UMC, Jacksonville, TX**).

c. Mission and Service

As in the Eucharist section, churches grasped the connection between ministry and the mission and service of the Church. Again, the starting pont for this thrust was thought by the churches to be the ministry of the laity. One congregation called for the churches to seek ways to put par. 4 into action, i.e.identify with the joys and suffering of all people and witness to them in caring love. Another congregation had stated that the statement on Ministry had been "provocative" because "The recognition that all Christians are called to ministry is challenging our people to service". When that church was asked about how BEM might change its style of mission and service, it replied

> It is hoped that all our people will begin intentionally seeking out and fulfilling their ministries (**Red Hill UMC, Parkersburg, WV**).

d. Devotional life and spiritual growth

Perhaps because of the more practical approach of the study group, or perhaps because of the focus on mission and service and educational strategies, there was little or no reaction by the churches to this area of the Church's life regarding ministry, unless one reads the increased commitment to lay ministry as one form of spiritual growth.

e. Theological perspectives

Here again, there was a call for a proper balance of emphasis between the lay ministry and the "set apart" ministry (**First UMC, Berkeley, CA**).

D. Question 4: Suggestions for Faith and Order

Several churches felt more emphasis needs to be put ont henature of individual gifts and the sharing of those gifts in community (e.g. **Centenary UMC, Mankato, MN**). One church wrote: "If our congregation were to enter into a yoking, federation or merger with another church, BEM would be an excellent theological bases for the new relationship" (**St. Andrew UMC, Memphis, TN**).

Churches also suggested that Faith and Order provide clarity regarding apostolic succession (**First UMC, Kane, PA**) with a stronger statement on the priesthood of all believers and push ahead toward the goal of mutual recognition of orders (**Red Hill UMC, Parkersburg, WA**).

Respondents were aware that this movement toward recognition would mean change, growth, and even painful confrontation. By far the most strongly worded and most numerous suggestions spoke to the issue of women's ordination. One church recommended "that the issue of the ordination of women be discussed more fully in our church and in our Sunday School classes" (**Vermont UMC, Quincy, IL**). Another church (also in Illinois) asked Faith and Order for

> ...more guidance on role of laity and women clergy in the Eucharist. One experience--Roman Catholics agreed on content of this section but balked at participation in a service because of role of a lay woman as one officiant (**Emmanual UMC, Polo, IL**).

While it is not clear here how the word "officiant" is to be understood, since Roman Catholic lay women now read Scripture and may assist clergy in some liturgical roles, the intent of the request is clear. Another group was even more direct:

> A stand should be taken in favor of ordination of women. Also, the word "sex" should be added to the list in M-50 (**Shepherd of the Valley UMC Scituate, RI; Washington UMC, Coventry, RI**).

VI CONCLUSION

While much of the evaluation of this process is already apparent by the seriousness and affirmation with which these responses have been shared, a few final comments in the words of responders may be important to conclude this report.

One pastor (who probably should not be identified) wrote a two sentence response as follows: "The study was conducted in one of our adult classes. I doubt that it will have any effect on our congregation at all and very little effect if any on the persons who participated in the study". Other lay and clergy leaders expressed quite the opposite. Here are several:

> ...I have genuinely enjoyed guiding the group and helping them hear the BEM document. As we read the paragraphs and commented on them to get clarity, there was strong and positive interest. As the pastor I found it beneficial to hear these people discuss their deeply-held experiences and Christian faith as it is lived out in the congregational (and larger) setting, and to have such a mature and open conversation about these important matters...My doctoral studies are in liturgical theology, and this is one way that I could share my excitement as a liturgical theologican and hopefully help others to see some of the sources of my spiritual and intellectual life...We appreciate the opportunity to be selected as a responding congregation **(Bracken UMC, San Antonio, TX)**.

> ...We have never had so much luck in finding churches to study any document as we have with the BEM document. The response has been wonderful **(From a Conference Chairperson)**.

> ...It would be well if BEM were promoted as a priority study for every congregation.

> ...This was the initial theological reflection for many in the class **(O'Fallon/Williams Memorial UMC, MO)**.

Overall, this study has increased the sensitivity and understanding of the theological perspectives and practices of other churches in the Christian tradition. "Greater respect and appreciation...has arisen among us becuase of this study. As BEM continues to be explored by local branches of the member churches of WCC that irenic spirit can only increase" **(Chehalis UMC, Washington)**.

Only one pastor who developed an extensive educational approach to BEM expressed real discouragement. The pastor said that a four sermon series was preached on unity, baptism, eucharist, and ministry, with "an invitational response"

following the sermon (coming forward for prayer or renewal of baptismal vows). While the services and topics were "dynamic", "few folks were interested in talking about these issues. Attendance at the 4 session study course varied from one to eight, and this discouraged me. Few were interested at the depth that I, as clergy, am". However as a consequence of their study, members now celebrate eucharist more frequently and have renewed their baptismal vows on several occasions, including the Easter Vigil Service, using the UM Service of Baptism, Confirmation and Renewal with the use of water. Perhaps there is more reason to be encourgaed than the pastor believes!

Several churches felt that BEM deserved more study and would encourage wide study of it in their conferences. Centenary United Methodist Church (Mankato, MN) suggested "There needs to be more of a connection with the local church -- broader dissemination and more distinct efforts to involve large members of lay people. This was a very positive educational experience that we believe needs to be shared throughout the Church". One group felt so strongly that BEM ought to be a priority-study item for every congregation that took a resolution to that effect to the annual conference, where it passed (W. Va).

A number of churches protested the difficult technical theological language, indicating that if the intent is for "local church folk" to study the documents, then that intention should be kept in mind at the outset. The average education for many churches is high school or less.

> ...it would be helpful if documents could be written with lay persons in mind. We spent a great deal of time just trying to understand what was being said and were not able to spend as much time on the implications of the text for our congregation (**Epworth UMC, Berkeley, CA**).

"Faith and Order could write its future documents in less cumbersome fashion. A glossary ought to a ccompany further refinements of BEM, or any other work; this would aid the lay person who wants to be included in the discussion, but often finds these trealises appear to be conversations among professionals, with laity allowed to overhear at their own risk" **(Chehalis UMC, Chehalis, WA)**.

Many churches felt an inordinate amount of space, energy, and technicality was spent on the Ministry section. They indicated that while they appreciated the inital emphasis on the "whole people of God" that set the context for the Ministry section, that from then on, the text focused on those small number of persons who are clergy. The issue, clearly, is that all our ministries -- lay and clergy -- be grounded in God's call to be in ministry in the world and among the people created and loved by God. The theological depth and sensitivity of many of the respondents should make us proud!

Genuine appreciation was expressed for the grounding in Scripture which the document displayed. For many, that is the way by which "the faith of the Church through the ages" can be attested to.

A number of groups expressed appreciation for the existence of diversity within the Church ans some went further to say that "it is almost a point of pride that our (UM) church is open to and flexible with a variety of beliefs...(However, we) were challenged...(as to) whether we would be willing to give up our flexibility for the sake of unity with those who have a more definitive set of beliefs and practices" (**Epworth UMC, Berkeley, CA**). At least one church tried to show its "flexibility" with this recommendation:

> There is a recognition that immersion baptism is not practiced generally in the UMC and that appropriate architectural considerations must be made to provide for this if the UMC is to put this important dimension into regular practice. We would urge that new church construction and remodeling of sanctuaries provide for immersion baptismal settings. The role of water is important, and an appropriate abundance of water should be used in baptism" (**Bracken UMC, San Antonio, TX**).

In other words, these responses would seem to indicate that flexibility, willingness to grow and openess to change are important for United Methodist. Christian unity is highly prized by people, and risks may be undertaken for the sake of clearly perceived benefits and deeply held theological precepts...Some points however, are "non-negotiable": ministry of the whole people of God, freedom from oppressive unifromity, a sense of being "in mission", the ordination of all persons -- men and women -- who experience God's call.

In conclusion, high hopes came from local churches that BEM will make a significant contribution to the theological, liturgical, evangelical, and ecumenical life of the church in the future.

> Worship continues as we remember what God has done for us in and through Jesus Christ. If we begin with worship, perhaps "visible unity" may become a necessary by-product of the Christian faith. We know of no better way whereby the ecumenical, universal church can achieve its goals (**Hennepin UMC, IL**).

> We must offer an open door through which the unchurched and persons of different religious traditions can enter and find a structure of religious belief and practice with which they can relate...It does not mean conformity...but a free expression...of the

> contribution one can make from previous religious ecperience. In this context, BEM actively promoted and presented to new members, become their "charter of acceptance", whereby they can receive us as a broadly accepting congregation in the forefront of theological and liturgical revival. In turn, the new members find in BEM the common elements of Christian faith and practice to which they can relate from their earlier background **(University Park UCM, Dallas, Texas).**

And finally a note of blessing is sounded in one church's urging Faith and Order to continue its task of bringing the insights of BEM before the Chruches.

> The suggestion that is offered to the work of Faith and Order is that it pray for patience. We found that our brief study raised more questions than it answered. However, we found our study to be very worthwhile. Our understanding of baptism, eucharist, and ministry were enriched. We would remind Faith and Order that love is patient, and that love for Christ and one another is what drives us in our work together **(Epworth UMC, Berkely, CA).**

ADDENDUM

ADDENDUM I

Appended to this document is an unusual resolution (later passed by the West Virginia Annual Conference) which was submitted to the General Commission by the Rev. James Kerr, W. Va. Conference Chairperson of GCCUIC, indicating joint action having been taken by both the United Methodist and the Roman Catholic ecumenical commission in affirming and commending BEM. This is direct response to the intent of BEM, which is to encourage joint action across denominations, if, for each of our communions, "the faith of the church through the ages" can be expressed as "sufficient" and if that be the case, how long can the churches of Jesus Christ remain separate?

RESOLUTION OF WEST VIRGINIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WHEREAS the World Council of Churches has presented to the churches of the Christian Faith the document, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, for study and response, and

WHEREAS the highest officials of our church bodies are not studying the document and preparing and appropriate response to the World Council of Churches in 1985, and

WHEREAS the church bodies at all levels of structure are asked to study the document and make response to our particular officials who will be making a response on our behalf,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we who are members of the Roman Catholic Church Commission on Religious Unity of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese and The United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns of West Virginia Annual Conference meeting is joint session in the St. Joseph's Seminary of Vienna, West Virginia on March 19, 1984 do hereby

1. Express our general agreement with and acceptance of this document, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,
2. Commend it to our highest officials who will be making the appropriate response to the World Council of Churches asking them to respond favorably for us, and
3. Present it to our pastors and local congregations in the Diocese and Annual Conference for their study and understanding, encouraging their favorable reception of this new document.

ADDENDUM II

The Shepherd of the Valley UMC and Washington UMC (of Scituate and Coventry, Rhode Island respectively) presented and extensive comparison of BEM with In Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting of the Consultation on Church Union. These churches

had been deeply involved in the study and response to In Quest, and therefore, on their own, proceeded to make their comparisons.

This study group responded to the question regarding the consequences that can be drawn from the text for relations and dialogue with other churches by describing the impact they believe that BEM will have on COCU.

Overall, they believe that in certain areas such as the ordination of women, sexism, racism, institutionalism, and congregational exclusivism, In Quest deals with them "to a considerably more advanced degree than BEM". They believe that the reason for this is that BEM is "heavy" on tradition, in contrast to reform.

The following is a summary of their responses to this question 2:

1. BEM even if there are broad and deep areas of agreement with COCU's document, In Quest of a Church of Christ Uniting ("Quest"), might not promote the COCU enterprise. A big obstacle for COCU has been, not theological disagreements, but feelings about institutionalism, hierarchies, "superchurch", and denomination identity.

2. BEM will have minimal impact on the CCOCU movement if no effort is made to widely publicize and market the content and significance of BEM and QUEST.

3. BEM seems to be slightly more clearly worded than QUEST.

4. There are several areas in which BEM and QUEST are similar, i.e.,

   a. The ministry of lay people is important.

   b. The Ministry should have a three-fold structure: Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons. The general descriptions of the functions of each are similar in BEM and QUEST.

   c. Both infant and believers Baptism are valuable.

   d. The brokeness of the Body of Christ (the whole Church) is decried.

5. There are several areas in which BEM is more advanced or more detailed than QUEST i.e.:

   a. The theological and personal meaninhs of Baptism.

   b. The theological and personal meanings of Eucharist.

   NOTE: The next edition of QUEST, or its successor document, might beneficially incorporate this material.

6. There are areas in QUEST which are more advanced or more detailed than BEM.

   a. All COCU participating denominations ordain women: QUEST affirms this practice and states that women should serve in any church office.

   b. The issue of racism is discussed forthrightly in QUEST.

   c. All COCU participating denominations have agreed that apostolic suiccession issues would not be a barrier to church union.

   d. QUEST grapples with the issue of institionalism (local churches and their members losing control, perogratives, identity; being "swallowed up" in a bureaucracy or hierarchy). BEM does not deal with this at all. Many national societies around the world are non-democratic; many people from those societies would not understand American aversion to their political/secular and church lives being controlled from the top.

   e. QUEST grapples with the problem of exclusiveness and parochialism among local church members.

   f. QUEST has a fuller treatment of the subject of Scripture vs. Tradition.

   g. QUEST has a more detailed description of the functions of a Presbyter.

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